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ABSTRACT

Students will work in groups to read and analyze fairy tales, brainstorm for events in their lives that could be changed into fairy tales, develop setting, characters, and plot for their fairy tale, write, illustrate, and compile their fairy tales into group books. During ten 45-minute lessons, students will: choose three fairy tales and read them in small groups; analyze and compare elements of their fairy tales; brainstorm and choose the type of life experience they would like to write about; help each other develop characters, settings, problems, resolutions and lessons for their fairy tales; individually write their narratives as fairy tales; edit and revise fairy tales as a group; compile their fairy tales into group books, choosing the method of binding they wish to use. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. Guidelines for student narrative self-assessment; an explanation of anecdotal note taking; and a list of common elements of fairy tales are attached. (PM)

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Fairy Tale Autobiographies

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Ten 45-minute sessions

Overview

Studying Fairy Tales for the elements they share is of interest to middle school learners. This lesson requires students to work together in small groups to read, discuss, and analyze fairy tales for characters, setting, conflict and theme. It also requires them to work together to decide what kind of experience they will write about, to edit and illustrate their stories, and finally to choose how to bind their group books.

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From Theory to Practice

This lesson integrates reading and writing in a collaborative, small-group learning experience. It utilizes technology, student-self assessment, and drawing connections between life and literature. Collaboration, small-group work, student choice and student responsibility are all recognized as best practices in teaching and learning and are utilized in this lesson.

Sources consulted:

Daniels, Harvey & Marilyn Bizar. *Methods That Matter: Six Structures for Best Practices Classrooms.* Stenhouse, 1998

Marlowe, Bruce A. & Marilyn L. Page. *Creating and Sustaining the Constructivist Classroom.* Corwin Press, 1998.

Student Objectives

Students will

- choose three fairy tales and read them in small groups.
- analyze and compare elements of their fairy tales.
- brainstorm and choose the type of life experience they would like to write about. Examples might include happy events, sad events, scary events, first times, and so forth. They will each rehearse their experience by telling it to their group.
- help each other develop characters, settings, problems, resolutions and lessons for their fairy tales.
- individually write their narratives as fairy tales.
- edit and revise fairy tales as a group.
- compile their fairy tales into group books, choosing the method of binding they wish to use.

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Resources

- Guidelines for Student Self-Assessment Handout
- Anecdotal Note Taking Handout
- Common Elements of Fairy Tales Handout
- Fairy Tale Links Web Site
- Mayan Fairy Tales Web Site
- Brothers Grimm Fairy Tale Web Site
- Bookbinding Web Site
- Group Fairy Tale Analysis Handout
- Individual Fairy Tale Planning Handout
- Three Mexican Fairy Tales Web Site

Instructional Plan

Resources

1. Assorted fairy tales for student choice, either in book form or available online.
2. Comparison Points for Fairy Tales Handout and Fairy Tale Autobiography Planning Handout.
3. Optional—Fairy Tale Elements Handout. This may be used or, ideally, students will brainstorm and discover these elements as they read their fairy tales.
4. Either handout directions or Internet links to Methods of Binding Web Site.

Preparation

Teacher will need to prepare mini-lessons on the elements of fairy tales, handouts for comparison of fairy tales, gather materials or Internet links for each student.

Instruction and Activities

1. Either select groups or let students select groups of 3 to 5 students to work together. Explain the overall project to the students. Give a mini-lesson on the elements of fiction and fairy tales, and give students comparison sheets. Allow students to select three fairy tales. Students will then read their fairy tales in their groups, discuss their fairy tales, and fill out comparison sheets.
2. Next, brainstorm with class the types of life events, which might be turned into a fairy tale (happy memories, sad memories, scary memories, first times, and so forth). Groups each decide which kind of memory their group wishes to write about. Groups discuss their individual memories and help each other develop a symbol system to turn their story into a fairy tale.
3. Individual group members write their memory as a fairy tale. Group members then conference with each other to help each other revise and edit their fairy tales. Groups then decide how they want to bind their collected stories.
4. Groups, with assistance from the teacher if necessary, prepare their stories for presentation and finally present their group's tales to the rest of the class.

Student Assessment/Reflections

Because this activity is so student directed, it should also be student assessed to a large part.

- Have groups compile a reflective narrative tracing the steps they took in the process, what they had problems with, how they worked out their problems, and how they feel about their final project.

- Students could include individual assessments of their contribution to the group project.
- Teachers could assess by keeping anecdotal records of students' participation in the process.
- Teachers could also collect all handouts completed by the students in the course of completing their projects.

NCTE/IRA Standards

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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Guidelines For Student Narrative Self- Assessment

In Your Narrative, answer the following questions:

1. How did you choose which fairy tales to read?
2. How did you utilize your group to analyze the fairy tales?
3. How did you utilize your group to determine fairy tale elements?
4. How did you utilize your group to decide on type of event in your own life to use for your fairy tale?
5. How did you utilize your group to change your event into a fairy tale?
6. How did you utilize your group to revise and edit your fairy tale?
7. What problems did your group encounter in doing this project?
8. How did your group overcome these problems?
9. How well did you cooperate with your group on your project?
10. Summarize how well you think your group worked and how well you worked within your group.

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Anecdotal Note Taking

There are many different methods to taking anecdotal notes. My favorite method is utilizing a pad of sticky notes, which I use during class time. Some notes are on groups as a whole and some on individual students. During the course of a class period I will write a note about five times. I will note which students are actively engaged in working in their groups or individual writing, which groups seem to be working well and not relying on the teacher to answer all of their questions, which groups give up easily and rely too much on the teacher, and which students are easily distracted from group activities.

After class, I will transfer my notes to either a lined notebook or a Word document. I will stick my notes on one side of the page and expand on my observation on the other side. I can use these notes to conference with groups or individual students who seem to be having a problem with the assignment so that they can better achieve success.

Another method would be to compile a checklist, based on the student narrative observations, and check off students or groups as often as you wanted to make the observations.

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Common Elements of Fairy Tales

1. A fairy tale begins with "Once upon a time..."
2. Fairy tales happen in the long ago.
3. Fairy Tales have fantasy and make believe in them.
4. Fairy Tales have clearly defined Good characters vs. Evil characters.
5. Royalty is usually present in a fairy tale, a beautiful princess/handsome prince.
6. There may be magic with giants, elves, talking animals, witches or fairies.
7. Fairy tales have a problem that needs to be solved.
8. It often takes three tries to solve the problem.
9. Fairy tales have happy endings - "they all lived happily ever after."
10. Fairy tales usually teach a lesson or have a theme.

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